

VISION FORUM *Ministries*

OUTREACH REPORT / MAY 2013



The “Miracle” of Dad’s Ten Thousand Grandchildren

By Douglas Winston Phillips

On April 20, the Lord Jesus Christ called my father, Howard J. Phillips, into eternity at 3:50 p.m. (EDT), at the age of 72. In the week following his passing, there were many significant articles written about him. From the *New York Times*, to the *Washington Post*, to various conservative and Christian news outlets, Dad is rightly being remembered as the man who defined, for his generation, courageous, principled leadership in defense of biblical and constitutional priorities for civil government and public policy.

While there are many important facets to my father’s legacy, I want to tell you about a very special “miracle” related to the blessing of life and Dad’s lifetime battle to defend unborn babies. The first is his public record as a defender of life, and the second is something much more personal—the behind-the-scene passions for life that motivated Dad when no one was watching, except the Lord and his family.



Howard J. Phillips (1941–2013)

A Vigorous Public Defense of the Unborn

Dad built a reputation as one of the greatest defenders of the unborn in the history of American politics. Early in his public career, he became a famous opponent of Planned Parenthood when he was appointed by President Nixon as Acting Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and given the responsibility for firing 15,000 employees and shutting down the legal machine behind the abortion movement—the Legal Services Corporation. This was the world of my early childhood in which I watched Dad stand



Remembering My Father with My Mother and Family

without flinching in the face of pickets, press, and personalities who sought to malign his reputation and harm him for his resolve in opposition to evil.



Honoring My Father at His Memorial Service

The following decade, Dad was the conservative leader principally responsible for establishing litmus tests for judicial nominees based on their actual track records on abortion, not just ear-tickling words offered during primary season or before a Senate confirmation hearing. For this reason, he opposed President Reagan on the appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor, and President Bush on the nomination of David Souter, to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In both cases, he testified before the Senate. In both cases, Republican pro-life leaders ignored the pro-abortion track records in favor of hollow presidential promises. In both cases, Dad was proven right. Both Souter and O'Connor affirmed *Roe* in the 1992 case, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. The month that decision was handed down, Dad began receiving calls from conservative leaders—“Howard, you were right. We should have listened.”

Later, Dad became the only candidate for President of the United States who opposed 100% of all abortions, and who refused to appoint judges

who would not rule constitutionally in opposition to *Roe* and pro-abortion legislation. Dad made it clear that, under biblical and constitutional law, abortion is illegal, notwithstanding what a handful of people on the Supreme Court may say.

A Private Passion for Children

Two weeks before my father's death, I asked a well-known Christian historian to handwrite a final letter to my dad which I would read to him at his bedside. I assumed that this friend would write a note thanking my father for his courageous political stances, but he did not. Instead, he wrote an extensive thank-you note to Dad expressing profound gratitude that he had “given” him a generation of grandchildren. Apparently, my father earnestly spoke some years ago to this man's daughter on the blessing and importance of children, encouraging her to trust the Lord and to seek many children. According to his letter, this exhortation convicted and inspired his daughter and son-in-law, and God blessed them with three more children.

This story is not surprising to me. As long as I can remember, Dad has spoken of children as a “blessing” and as God's “reward.” My mom wholeheartedly agreed, and together they created a culture of life in our home. As the head of



Three Generations of Phillips Men

the home, Dad set the tone for the necessity of embracing life in the way he spoke and lived. He loved children and viewed them as treasures. He delighted in them and always hoped for many more. It was inconceivable to Dad that any man would want to thwart the natural process of procreation. To Dad it was very simple—children



Dad Addresses Students at the Witherspoon School

are God's gift. And why would any sane man refuse a gift from the Lord?

Dad's private pro-life ethic was not merely intellectual. It was emotional, personal, and living. It was evidenced in the way he loved to be with children and interacted with them, and was clear from the way in which he spoke to couples about the joy of a fruitful womb—never a hard pitch, never a lecture—just a brief winsome word of encouragement.

The “Miracle” of Dad's Ten Thousand Grandchildren

Years later, when Beall and I founded Vision Forum Ministries, this principle became one of the hallmarks of our work, as I took Dad's exhortations and passions for life and sought to flesh them out even further. Over the last fifteen years, I have delivered hundreds of messages at no less than two hundred conferences, church services, and special events. Some of these events—such as VFM's Baby Conference—have addressed complicated questions relating to end-of-life issues, abortion, and the future of biomedical ethics.

But one theme has been constant: God is the God of life! Children are a blessing! We cannot expect America to turn from the crime of abortion until the people of God embrace a true life ethic in their own households and repent of their faithlessness.

That's a tough message today. It has resulted in significant criticism of me and my ministry. But such criticism was no concern to Dad, and it is no concern to me.

Here is where the “miracle” comes in. About ten years ago, something amazing began to happen

to me at nearly every home school conference at which I was a keynote speaker. Sometime in the course of the event, someone would approach me and say something like this: “Mr. Phillips, I want you to meet the children I have now because of your message.” Then they would open a wallet and show me pictures or point to the children next to them. Sometimes they would say: “I was so convicted by what you said that I got a reversal.”

This beautiful miracle has happened to me over the course of ten years at almost every one of these conferences, with only a handful of exceptions. Every time I go with my children to an event now, I turn to them beforehand and say, “Do you think God will bless us again with more babies [meaning testimonies about babies]. Well, we shall see.”

My children have almost become too used to seeing this happen. It is a little providential reminder of God's love and mercy.

But here is the point: These testimonies are ultimately the fruit of my father's ministry. He never realized the breadth and the depth of the impact he



Sharing an Embrace with Dad

would have with his life, simply because he taught me to trust God for children.

Dad fought dragons in Washington. He battled on the beaches of principle against the enemy of political expediency. He modeled fidelity to the cause of liberty and justice. But one of Dad's less-known, but eternally relevant legacies is that he is the grandfather of ten thousand children who would not be here, but for his deep and abiding love of life.

Thanks to his influence, one of Vision Forum Ministries' mission points is—and will remain—“Embracing the Blessing of Children and the Sanctity of Human Life.” ☸

Fathers & Daughters United:

A Report from the 2013 Father Daughter Retreat

Old-fashioned games and a beautiful Southern picnic kicked off the 2013 Father & Daughter Retreat, where hundreds of fathers and daughters recently gathered from around the country at Georgia's Callaway Gardens to spend time together.

Following the delicious ice-cream social that evening, Scott Brown highlighted the blessings of daughters honoring fathers: "If they abound, if they

they relate to the father-daughter relationship.

Following this was a most special occasion—the Victorian High Tea. Dressed in their best, fathers escorted daughters to beautifully arranged tables covered with fresh fruit, scones with cream, Darjeeling tea, cakes, tarts, sandwiches, jams, and chocolates.



Encouraging Fellowship

The evening opened with a message by Curtis Bowers who explained to fathers the amazing opportunities they have to disciple, prepare, and love their daughters as they maximize the economy of the home. To close out the day, Craig Houston and his sixteen-year-old daughter Anna shared their testimony via live-stream. Anna was recently diagnosed with leukemia and is awaiting a bone marrow transplant. She shared the prayer of her life: "If the Lord wills and I should keep living on this earth . . . [I pray] that God would be glorified, and that I would serve Him to the fullest."

Curtis Bowers Shares His Family's Testimony

lack, if they are in a high place, in a low place, at liberty or in prison; if they are in health, if sick, in whatever state: it shall go well with them." Later that evening, Doug Phillips gave a stirring rally call via Skype, impressing the importance of maximizing the next few days: "Make this time count!"

Saturday morning, Geoff Botkin began the day with a message to fathers on the importance of identifying and developing their daughters' God-given gifts and talents. His own daughters Anna Sofia and Elizabeth followed with an inspiring message to young ladies on finding their identity in Christ. They urged girls in their sowing years not to get caught up with what personality or type of person they are, except for one: the person that God desires them to be. Mrs. Becky Morecraft then sang several beloved hymns and illustrated the use of meaningful words with wonderful stories as



Special Father Daughter Tea Time

Fathers and daughters left the retreat well equipped to wholeheartedly pursue close-knit, kingdom-advancing relationships with this in mind: Time is short, and gifts must be used deliberately for the glory of God. ❀

Rise Up O Men of God: 17th Annual Titanic Society Commemoration

The Christian Boys' & Men's Titanic Society (CBMTS) hosted two events on the 101st anniversary of *Titanic's* sinking. 2013 marked their 17th year to convene, with society founder Doug Phillips hosting a small private event with his sons in Washington, D.C.; and Wesley Strackbein—a charter member of the society—spearheading a gathering of eighteen boys and men in San Antonio, Texas.

Just before midnight on April 14, the Phillips men visited the Titanic Memorial in D.C., the inscription of which states in part: "To the brave men who perished in the wreck of the Titanic, April 15, 1912. They gave their lives that women and children might be saved." The San Antonio gathering was held the following night at Chama



Gaucha Brazilian Steakhouse, with Wesley Strackbein serving as master of ceremonies. Strackbein explained the history of the *Titanic*, including the nobility of manhood demonstrated during the tragedy, charging those in attendance to heed God's call to act as men.

In reflecting on *Titanic's* legacy, the boys and men resolved to not only live lives worthy of the sacrifice of this ship's brave heroes, but to emulate Jesus Christ, who paid the ultimate price to save His bride, the Church. ☸

Help Jonathan Park Explore Ancient Egypt

Jonathan Park and the rest of the Creation Response Team are headed for a journey they've never attempted before—into the exciting world of Ancient Egypt. In our last album, Jonathan, Kendall, and their faithful guide, Akiva, investigated some of the most important archeological sites in Israel. In *The Whispering Sphinx*, the team will follow the journal of Dr. Howard as it sends them on a journey to the great pyramids of Giza, archeological discoveries along the great Nile, and a puzzling artifact found underneath the Sphinx—all somehow tied to a bigger plot for a new dictator who is fighting for control of the country!

As they investigate the mysteries of Egypt, they will discover that Egyptian archeology is actually in harmony with the biblical accounts of the Old Testament. Through this new series, our hope is to equip children and their

families to form a biblical view of world history. The 12 episodes for *The Whispering Sphinx* have been written and recorded, and with your help, we can finish producing them. ☸



Support Needed: New JP Album in Production

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Alaska Untamed: A Hazardous Journeys Experience *July 17-27*

You step out of a small float plane in the center of a pristine 50-mile-long alpine lake, surrounded by rugged peaks. You are not alone. You are in the midst of a dense wilderness, teeming with wildlife and adventure. Welcome to the Alaska Untamed Bootcamp—a Hazardous Journeys Society excursion. Participants at this unique HJS bootcamp will engage in diverse field training exercises, including wild game tracking, salmon fishing, a memorable 24-hour “Alaska Bush Challenge,” and much more—all with the goal of building a greater understanding of man’s role in exploration and discovery.



HJS Team Leader Austin Collins Deep in the Alaska Bush

The aim of the bootcamp is to train men in hands-on skills and planning strategies to prepare them to lead their own Hazardous Journeys, and to empower them with a vision to explore the corners of the world for the glory of the Creator

God. Our HJS bootcamp director, Austin Collins, will be joined by host Preston Caver, a wilderness man and professional big game hunter who knows how to push men into experiencing the Alaskan frontier to the fullest. Lace up your boots and join us this July 17-27 for an unforgettable outdoor adventure. Visit hazardousjourneys.org to learn more and to register. ☸

Father & Son Mountain Rendezvous *August 28–September 1*

Join us at Colorado’s beautiful Crooked Creek Ranch, situated among 12,000–13,000-foot peaks, for the 2013 Father and Son Mountain Rendezvous. At the event, fathers and sons will hear thought-provoking messages designed to instill vision and to strengthen the father-son relationship. Dads and their boys will also have the opportunity to participate in organized outdoor activities, as well as have free time to walk the hiking trails together. Learn survival lessons, astronomy and GPS navigation, map and compass skills, tomahawk and knife throwing, and much more, as part of this unforgettable father-son experience. ☸



Philadelphia Faith & Freedom Tour *July 8–13*

Come with us on the Philadelphia Faith and Freedom Tour as we uncover the providential roots of our nation. Journey to Philadelphia where the first Continental Congress convened and patriot leaders later signed America’s Declaration of Independence. Follow General George Washington through some of his most difficult and daring days of service—from the long winter at Valley Forge to his famous crossing of the Delaware and his surprising victory at Princeton. Learn about the Constitutional Convention, the Great Awakening, and much more. ☸



Visit visionforumministries.org/events/ to register and learn more about these three events.

Ancient Greece Faith & Freedom Tour *September 20–29*

Join Dr. Joe Morecraft, Bill Potter, and Doug Phillips on an unforgettable journey in the footsteps of the Apostles as part of the 2013 Faith & Freedom Tour to Greece and Turkey. Enjoy the New Testament “in 3D” as they trace the Apostle Paul’s steps to such ancient cities as Philippi, Ephesus, Athens, and Thessalonica, in a voyage across the Sea of Marmara and the famed Aegean. Go with them to the Island of Patmos where the Apostle John authored the Book of Revelation while in exile. Stand on Mars Hill in Athens’ Areopagus where the Apostle Paul



Your Private Yacht: Sale into the Past with Us

challenged Greek philosophers in Acts 17. Tour ancient Ephesus where the Temple of Hadrian stands and where both Paul and Timothy labored as part of the Ephesian church. Stroll the streets of Mykonos, a Greek island in the Aegean that was well known in the ancient world. Visit



Doug Phillips in Ancient Athens

important sites in Istanbul—the old capital of Byzantium—where the critical Church Councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon were drafted and where Christian culture flourished long after the fall of Rome.

Experience the rich life of the Old World with its fascinating people, food, archeology, and architecture. Climb an ancient ruin. Shop in one of the colorful bazaars. Stop in a cafe and order a Greek Coffee. And while at sea, take time for a snorkel in the beautiful water of the Aegean. Travel and accommodations for the journey will be aboard the Windstar, a sleek, four-masted private sailing yacht featuring a first-class crew, full-service dining as part of your trip package, along with intimate staterooms and four wide-open decks, allowing guests room for private moments or to simply enjoy the voyage. 🌀

Visit visionforumministries.org/ancientgreece2013/



The Acropolis Next to Mars Hill



History of America Mega-Conference *July 2–6*

Are you and your children equipped to answer the political correctness and historical revisionism that dominates higher academia and the broader culture today—to defend our nation’s godly heritage against the fierce onslaught of secular skepticism?

Antagonists to the Christian faith are stealing our history, and it’s time we take it back. To help address this need, Vision Forum Ministries is pleased to announce the History of America Mega-Conference, an exciting five-day event to be held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Join a faculty of distinguished scholars and thinkers delivering more than fifty stirring lectures on a host of topics concerning America’s past—all from a distinctively Christian worldview.

In VFM tradition, the conference will involve reenactments, lectures, music, and exciting opportunities to enjoy the Fourth of July in patriotic style, as well as visit the 150th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg which will feature more than 400 horses and 100 cannons, along with thousands of reenactors and civilian interpreters.

Come in costume, representing characters from America’s history. Meet past presidents, generals, frontiersman, pilgrims, patriots, heroes and heroines. Enjoy the music of Danny Craig,

among other musical performers, as part of our Sequicentennial Gala.

Whether you are a history buff, homeschool parent, college student, young or old, we encourage you to join us for the great summer event of 2013—the History of America Mega-Conference!

Topics include:

- A Providential Perspective of the 17th–20th Centuries
- The Power and Purpose of the Great Awakening
- The History of Education in America
- Understanding Each of America’s Great Wars
- A Sequicentennial Symposium on the Civil War
- Why FDR and the New Deal Enslaved America
- Marxism, Feminism, and Social Darwinism
- The History of Courtship & Marriage in our Nation
- The Meaning of the Wild West—and much more!

For more information and to Register, Visit:

visionforumministries.org/events/hamc/